

Adjournment Debate

What measures have been taken have been taken by Air Canada, for example, but not because of any legislation. Of course, it has not been taken up by any of the other airline companies or by the bus or train companies. Treasury Board is still fighting employees who want a smoke-free work environment. There has been no action on the part of the Government in the direction of reducing smoking. On the contrary, Government is still pushing cigarettes. It is still allowing advertising, and the taxpayer is still subsidizing these advertisements.

The companies have to advertise because they are losing customers. Thirty-five thousand smokers are dying every year. Some people are intelligent and effective enough to quit smoking, so the companies have to go after new people, and they are going after women and children. The tobacco companies are doing this extremely effectively. Among girls in Canada between the ages of 12 years and 19 years, 39 per cent smoke daily. Among young women aged 20 years to 29 years, 49 per cent smoke daily, and we must remember that this is the prime child-bearing years. It means women are harming their own health and the health of their newborn.

Advertising is geared to women and children, and it is working. The tobacco companies are going after people with promotions of reduced prices which, of course, we have seen happen in other countries when there have been only partial bans. For example, the ban on television advertising of cigarettes in Britain was followed up with heavy promotions, and those promotions were effective.

What does the Minister mean when he says he is getting down to talking with the tobacco companies? What is he actually talking about? He tells us he is talking about getting the tobacco companies to improve the health warning. Instead of that puny little one-inch sentence across an enormous billboard, which can hardly be seen, he wants the tobacco companies to show more visible warnings and ones which are more to the point.

Let us be very clear. The tobacco manufacturers are never going to show a really effective health warning because they do not want that effect. If the warning were to be effective, they would not be advertising at all. In fact, they are spending more than \$100 million a year on advertising. They will probably go for a slightly improved health warning and that will be that. It will not be one which will dissuade people from smoking. It is not going to overturn the use of lifestyle, the use of the Lang gliders and all the cultural and sports promotions which these advertisers get away with.

The Minister says he wants comprehensive action. Unfortunately, an Hon. Member is not allowed to ask five Ministers a question one at a time as to what they would do. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Côté) must tell us if he is going to put cigarette and tobacco products under the Hazardous Products Act which Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada have demanded. We have no answer yet that would be an effective step. There are a whole lot of other things. Labour

Canada should amend the Labour Code to give adequate protection, and we need the ban on advertising.

I call upon the Parliamentary Secretary and, indeed, challenge her when she rises today to answer me, to come up with specifics and tell us what the Government's comprehensive plan of action is. We are tired of speeches. We are tired of being blamed for not understanding the Government's magnificent plan. If it has a plan, let us hear the specifics. Let us hear about how it will deal with women and children, with workers, the public, with people in transportation and people in the workplace. Let us hear how Canadians are going to have real protection against Canada's number one preventable health problem.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gabrielle Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer to my hon. colleague, and in particular to the request made by Physicians for a Smoke Free Canada that tobacco products be included in Part II of the Schedule to the Hazardous Products Act and be regulated in the manner provided for by the Act. That request has been made to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Côté), and he will follow it up within the scope of his responsibilities. His answer will come within the framework of this government's global approach to tobacco, an issue involving many areas of responsibility. For example, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has taken action on tobacco taxation. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) is presently developing programs to help producers giving up this crop and tobacco producing areas turn to other operations. Similarly, other Ministers who are addressing the problem within the scope of their responsibilities. Historically, there has always been contradictions in the federal policy on tobacco. We are presently trying to put in place a more consistent policy with more emphasis on health. To that end, we do not hesitate to call on every department.

As for the Department of National Health and the issue of tobacco advertizing in particular, there is no doubt that selfregulation of that form of advertizing by the tobacco industry must be reconsidered.

The voluntary code now in effect has been violated in many cases and on many occasions and the adequate character of present agreements as well as their implementation have given rise to general dissatisfaction.

This is the reason why the Department of National Health and Welfare has granted to the tobacco industry an extension up to the end of June to allow them to submit a plan aimed at regulating its publicity and the promotion of tobacco. If the industry does not come up with an adequate project for solving the immediate and most important problems of publicity and promotion of tobacco, then the Government will clearly have no other choice but to consider possible legislative controls.